

Galit Sharma

3/11/2010

Public Hearing, Appropriations Committee

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE NURTURING FAMILIES NETWORK

And against the proposed cuts in the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan, Line 56 under DSS

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Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Galit Sharma, I am the Clinical Supervisor of the Nurturing Families Network at the Coordinating Council for Children in Crisis, Inc., in New Haven.

Here we are again, for the fourth time this past year, asking you once again to support the Nurturing Families Network and to vote against practically eliminating the program from the high-risk communities of New Haven and Hartford.

I don't have new figures to share with you -- you have heard it all before, and I have included a fact sheet with my testimony, along with a letter from a mother in our program. You already know that Nurturing Families is effective in reducing child abuse and neglect and you know how important it is to the State of Connecticut. You know, because if you haven't believed in it you would not have supported it in the past. Please, don't destroy this valuable asset that took fifteen years to build. It is truly worth fighting for.

Think of Nurturing Families as a smoke detector: inexpensive, effective, consistently present to react to an early sign of trouble. Certainly, investing fifteen dollars in a smoke detector to prevent a costly house fire is a sensible thing to do.

The Nurturing Families Network is the smoke detector of child abuse and neglect. It is inexpensive, effective, and consistently present to detect an early sign of trouble and address it. It is sensible to invest in it at an annual cost of \$3,500 per family, so we don't have to pay \$30,000 for the same family under DCF. It will cost the state 11 million dollars to support the additional families that will end up in DCF. This is ten million dollars more than what the Governor hopes to save by cutting the proposed sites.

Of course the budget has to be balanced and the economy has to be stimulated. But to stimulate the economy people have to be working. If the proposed cuts pass one hundred additional Connecticut residents will be out of a job. The State will have to pay them unemployment benefits, support their children on Husky and WIC and provide additional services they might need. A hundred families that lost an income will only add to the public's uncertainty and contribute to the decrease in private spending.

**Cutting the Nurturing Families program in New Haven and Hartford doesn't make sense any way you look at it: It will cost more, increase unemployment, and reduce positive community outcomes.**

Please, vote to preserve the Nurturing Families Network in New Haven and Hartford.

Thank you for your time.

Galit Sharma

Nurturing Families Network

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## **Save the New Haven Nurturing Families Network!**

### **A program of the Children's Trust Fund The CT Department of Social Services**

Governor Rell has proposed the elimination of the community-based sites of the Nurturing Families Network providing intensive home visiting to high-risk first time parents. She also proposes to cut the budget of the hospital-based sites by 30%. Here is what you should know:

- Over 100 employees statewide will lose their jobs
- Over 1000 fewer families will receive services
- A cut to the home visiting programs will likely result in over 350 additional cases of child abuse and neglect next year at a cost to the state of nearly \$11 million in new DCF cases
- It costs only \$3500/family to provide home visiting
- Poverty is one of the major indicators for child abuse and neglect – New Haven is the poorest city of the 21 towns making up the New Haven area
- The median family income in New Haven is \$35,950, which is only 49% of the regional average (2000 census)

The Nurturing Families Network has proven outcomes, evaluated by the University of Hartford's Center for Social Research.

- The rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect in high-risk families participating in Nurturing Families is, on average, only 3% compared to 20% for similar families not participating in this type of program.
- The immunization rate for two-year olds in NFN is 93% compared to 66% for two year olds with a similar demographic background on Medicaid.
- A significant percentage of parents in NFN complete high school, become employed and become more economically self-sufficient.

The Nurturing Families Network is a highly cost-effective program that depends on years of infrastructure development across the state and will not be easily reconstructed if subjected to the Governor's cuts. Each DCF case is almost 10 times as expensive as the most intensive Nurturing Families Network home visitation service. Furthermore, by the time children are referred to DCF, real damage has already occurred. The NFN's "penny of prevention" can save the state many "pounds of cure" while preventing long-term damage to children.

To the Appropriation Committee, Letter of support from NFN mom:

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hi my name is alexandria and i have been involved with nurtering familes sence  
my daughter was born 11/7/07. and i have had a good experince with them my worker comes  
every monday and she is great. she brings me pamflits and we watch video clips on all  
different types of things like children and their minds as in all the certin windows  
in there mind and how you need to get as much into them when there small before they close.  
all the stages and ages babies and kids do things. i lov getiing the pamflits about children  
and there sages because i love to be further educatedon what i like. and that how i lern to  
be a good mom. i love to know how i1m doing and where my child is in her development.  
nerturing familes is a good organization ever sence i have been involved i have lerned  
much more and i have meet nice people and opened up alot.